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Grand Ledge, St. Johns to Receive Broadband Via Power Lines

LANSING: The Michigan Broadband Development Authority (MBDA) today announced it has closed on a \$520,000 loan with the New York-based Shpigler Group, Inc. that will bring broadband over power line (BPL) service to two mid-Michigan communities. Starting later this fall, customers in Grand Ledge and St. Johns will be able to choose BPL for their home and business Internet needs. This will be only the 5th such commercial deployment of BPL technology in the nation.

The company will do business as “Lighthouse Broadband” and will be the first provider of its kind in Michigan, offering business and residential customers in Grand Ledge and St. Johns a new high-speed Internet option. BPL technology uses the existing electric distribution grid and in-home wiring to transmit broadband signals to businesses and consumers.

Through the use of power lines, BPL signals can be delivered to virtually any home or business without the exhaustive cost of developing new cable or fiber infrastructures. Moreover, BPL affords utility companies the ability to provide enhanced services like outage notification, automatic meter reading, and enhanced management of electric demand. Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth (DLEG) Director David C. Hollister said, “For Michigan this BPL roll-out will further build the state’s reputation as a place where innovative technology can thrive, enhancing the infrastructure for job growth and retention in Michigan. We are thrilled that Lighthouse Broadband has chosen Michigan for this deployment.”

“This project once again makes Michigan a showcase for advanced broadband technology deployments,” noted James W. Butler III, Vice President of the MBDA. “In its short history, the MBDA has facilitated investments that have supported the largest non line of sight (NLOS) and largest line of sight wireless broadband deployments in the country. While all of our loans have helped bring new or more affordable service to different parts of the state, to now help bring yet another innovative technology into the Michigan marketplace highlights another important role the MBDA plays in terms of enhancing our state’s status as a technology leader.”

In the long term, the ubiquity of power lines could allow BPL providers the opportunity to connect rural residents to the Internet and provide an additional competitive option to consumers and businesses. Performance of BPL is similar to that of cable modem, but unlike cable offers the same speeds both upstream and downstream.

David Shpigler, founder and President of the Shpigler Group, stressed the important role the MBDA plays in helping emerging broadband companies leverage their capital for expansion activities in Michigan: “While other higher cost capital options were available to support this expansion (venture capital, etc.), the MBDA loan is allowing Lighthouse Broadband to spend more capital where it needs to be spent: on the network itself. The MBDA has been a key partner for this project.”

The MBDA, an agency in the Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth, was created to help the state attract more private sector investment in high-speed, Internet infrastructure, and to increase demand for and utilization of broadband services. More information about the Michigan Broadband Development Authority and its programs can be found at www.broadbandauthority.org.

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